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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE &amp; AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA-UAW

February 23, 2009

To: Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and Members of the  
Appropriations Committee

From: Robert Madore, Director Region 9A UAW  
Beverley Brakeman, Community Action Program Representative  
Susan DeMaria, Regional NOLSW Representative, UAW Local 2320

**Re: Legal Services Funding**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the committee.

My name is Beverley Brakeman and I am here tonight on behalf of our Director Bob Madore who was unable to attend this meeting because he is out of state. With me is Susan DeMaria, the Regional Union Representative for our members in UAW Local 2320, the National Organization of Legal Service Workers (NOLSW).

The United Auto Workers (UAW) is here this evening in solidarity with the CT Legal Services (CLS) and other legal aid programs in the state to ask you to appropriate an additional \$9 million dollars in the Judicial Branch budget for legal services.

Legal services/aid programs have a combined \$9 million deficit as a result of the economy. Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) have provided most of legal services funding, but the stalled housing market and near-zero interest rates have caused an 80% drop in IOLTA fund.

There will be a bill heard before the Judiciary Committee that proposes to raise these needed funds by increasing Superior Court filing fees, increasing the attorney occupational tax and using additional general funds.

UAW Local 2320 NOLSW is proud to represent the employees of CLS and that our members have stepped up to the plate so their clients don't suffer. They have taken 20% cuts in pay and hours, increased their contribution to their health care and have been actively involved in working with management to identify other cost saving measures.

**Despite all of their efforts, the hole is too big to fill and your help is needed.**

The legal aid network in Connecticut, as you know, provides urgently needed legal services throughout the state that save the state money by:

- a. helping people keep a job or find other means of support;
- b. finding ways for people to stay in their homes rather than homeless;
- c. assisting individuals in getting appropriate medical and behavioral health keeping them from having to access costly emergency care;
- d. securing access to quality education for children and those with disabilities;
- e. protecting consumers, especially elderly and disabled individuals, from costly consumer scams;
- f. avoiding harmful discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability or source of income.
- g. Finding legal and other resources for victims of domestic violence.

In essence, CLS and the other legal aid program maximize the impact of their efforts by undertaking cases and projects that cost-effectively benefit large numbers of needy people.

Without your assistance, people in this state will suffer. There is no question about that and we look to you to help restore this lost funding so our attorneys can continue to be a vital part of the state's safety net for low income individuals and families.

Thank you.

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